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19 February 1980

MEMORANDUM

THE INDIAN OCEAN ZONE OF PEACE AND U.S.  
MEMBERSHIP OF THE UN AD HOC COMMITTEE ON THE INDIAN OCEAN

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Most members of the UN Ad Hoc Committee on the Indian Ocean would welcome a US decision to join the Committee, US allies on the Committee who have fought against formulations of a "zone of peace" that could inhibit Western defense preparations (principally Australia, Japan, and Greece) would be particularly pleased by a more active U.S. role in countering Soviet statements. Many nonaligned members would also approve of our participation, interpreting it as a signal that the US is serious about arms control in the Indian Ocean despite continued suspension of the US-Soviet negotiations on the subject and that we recognize the littoral states' own role in determining security arrangements for their region.

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The IOZP concept has not focused solely on naval presence and bases or on military limitations that are "clearly detrimental" to US interests. The states in the region have proposed many alternative formulations for such a zone and have so far reached only partial agreement. The most recent multi-lateral declaration on the subject-- the final document of a UN meeting on the Indian Ocean held last July--calls for the great powers to desist from any use of military force against the sovereignty and independence of a littoral or hinterland state. According to this document, the IOZP should include the territory and air space of littoral and hinterland states as well as the Indian Ocean itself.

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Most regional states would support a US approach that retained the IOZP's focus on US and Soviet forces, but limiting the regional states' own military activity has also been an issue in discussions of the IOZP. Pakistan, which is concerned about Indian military predominance in the region, has proposed

PA M-80-10094

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a requirement that littoral and hinterland states maintain "reasonable ratios" among their armed forces.

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The as yet inchoate nature of the "zone of peace" concept gives the US considerable opportunity to influence the Committee's deliberations from within. The outcome of preparations for the 1981 conference will, however, depend at least as much on the major powers' military activity in the Indian Ocean region as on the composition of the Ad Hoc Committee.

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